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Chronology

1885	David Herbert Richards Lawrence (hereafter DHL) born in Eastwood, Nottinghamshire, the fourth child of Arthur John Lawrence, collier, and Lydia, née Beardsall, daughter of a pensioned-off engine fitter.
1891–8	Attends Beauvale Board School.
1898–1901	Becomes first boy from Eastwood to win a County Council scholarship to Nottingham High School, which he attends until July 1901.
1901	Works three months as a clerk at Haywood's surgical appliances factory in Nottingham; severe attack of pneumonia.
1902	Begins frequent visits to the Chambers family at Haggs Farm, Underwood, and starts his friendship with Jessie Chambers.
1902–5	Pupil-teacher at the British School, Eastwood; sits the King's Scholarship exam in December 1904 and is placed in the first division of the first class.
1905–6	Works as uncertificated teacher at the British School; writes his first poems and starts his first novel *Laetitia* (later *The White Peacock*, 1911).
1906–8	Student at Nottingham University College following the normal course leading to a teacher's certificate; qualifies in July 1908. Wins *Nottinghamshire Guardian* Christmas 1907 short-story competition with 'A Prelude' (submitted under name of Jessie Chambers); writes second version of *Laetitia*.
1908–11	Elementary teacher at Davidson Road School, Croydon.
1909	Meets Ford Madox Hueffer (later Ford), who begins to publish his poems and stories in the *English Review* and recommends rewritten version of *The White Peacock* to William Heinemann; DHL writes *A Collier's Friday Night* (1934) and first version of 'Odour of Chrysanthemums' (1911); friendship with Agnes Holt.

1910 Writes *The Saga of Siegmund* (first version of *The Trespasser*, 1912), based on the experiences of his friend, the Croydon teacher Helen Corke; starts affair with Jessie Chambers; writes first version of *The Widowing of Mrs. Holroyd* (1914); ends affair with Jessie Chambers but continues friendship; starts to write *Paul Morel* (later *Sons and Lovers*, 1913); death of Lydia Lawrence in December; gets engaged to his old friend Louie Burrows.

1911 Fails to finish *Paul Morel*; strongly attracted to Helen Corke; starts affair with Alice Dax, wife of an Eastwood chemist; meets Edward Garnett, publisher's reader for Duckworth, who advises him on writing and publication. In November falls seriously ill with pneumonia and has to give up school-teaching; *The Saga* accepted by Duckworth; DHL commences its revision as *The Trespasser*.

1912 Convalesces in Bournemouth; breaks off engagement to Louie; returns to Eastwood; works on *Paul Morel*; in March meets Frieda Weekley, wife of Ernest, Professor at the University College of Nottingham; ends affair with Alice Dax; goes to Germany on a visit to his relations on 3 May; travels, however, with Frieda to Metz. After many vicissitudes, some memorialized in *Look! We Have Come Through!* (1917), Frieda gives up her marriage and her children for DHL; in August they journey over the Alps to Italy and settle at Gargnano, where DHL writes the final version of *Sons and Lovers*.

1913 *Love Poems* published; writes *The Daughter-in-Law* (1965) and 200 pp. of *The Insurrection of Miss Houghton* (abandoned); begins *The Sisters*, eventually to be split into *The Rainbow* (1915) and *Women in Love* (1920). DHL and Frieda spend some days at San Gaudenzio, then stay at Irschenhausen in Bavaria; DHL writes first versions of 'The Prussian Officer' and 'The Thorn in the Flesh' (1914); *Sons and Lovers* published in May. DHL and Frieda return to England in June, meet John Middleton Murry and Katherine Mansfield. They return to Italy (Fiascherino, near Spezia) in September; DHL revises *The Widowing of Mrs. Holroyd*; resumes work on *The Sisters*.

1914 Rewrites *The Sisters* (now called *The Wedding Ring*) yet again; agrees for Methuen to publish it; takes J. B. Pinker

as agent. DHL and Frieda return to England in June, marry on 13 July. DHL meets Catherine Carswell and S. S. Koteliansky; compiles short-story collection *The Prussian Officer* (1914). Outbreak of war prevents DHL and Frieda returning to Italy; at Chesham he first writes *Study of Thomas Hardy* (1936) and then begins *The Rainbow*; starts important friendships with Ottoline Morrell, Cynthia Asquith, Bertrand Russell and E. M. Forster; grows increasingly desperate and angry about the war.

1915 Finishes *The Rainbow* in Greatham in March; plans lecture course with Russell; they quarrel in June. DHL and Frieda move to Hampstead in August; he and Murry bring out *The Signature* (magazine, three issues only). *The Rainbow* published by Methuen in September, suppressed at the end of October, prosecuted and banned in November. DHL meets painters Dorothy Brett and Mark Gertler; he and Frieda plan to leave England for Florida; decide to move to Cornwall instead.

1916 Writes *Women in Love* between April and October; publishes *Twilight in Italy* and *Amores*.

1917 *Women in Love* rejected by publishers; DHL continues to revise it. Makes unsuccessful attempts to go to America. Begins *Studies in Classic American Literature* (1923); publishes *Look! We Have Come Through!* In October he and Frieda evicted from Cornwall on suspicion of spying; in London he begins *Aaron's Rod* (1922).

1918 DHL and Frieda move to Hermitage, Berkshire, then to Middleton-by-Wirksworth; he publishes *New Poems*; writes *Movements in European History* (1921), *Touch and Go* (1920) and the first version of 'The Fox' (1920).

1919 Seriously ill with influenza; moves back to Hermitage; publishes *Bay*. In the autumn, Frieda goes to Germany and then joins DHL in Florence; they visit Picinisco and settle in Capri.

1920 Writes *Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious* (1921). He and Frieda move to Taormina, Sicily; DHL writes *The Lost Girl* (1920), *Mr Noon* (1984), continues with *Aaron's Rod*; on summer visit to Florence has affair with Rosalind Baynes; writes many poems from *Birds, Beasts and Flowers* (1923). *Women in Love* published.

1921 DHL and Frieda visit Sardinia and he writes *Sea and Sardinia* (1921); meets Earl and Achsah Brewster; finishes *Aaron's Rod* in the summer and writes *Fantasia of the Unconscious* (1922) and 'The Captain's Doll' (1923); plans to leave Europe and visit USA; puts together collection of stories *England, My England* (1922) and group of short novels *The Ladybird*, *The Fox* and *The Captain's Doll* (1923).

1922 DHL and Frieda leave for Ceylon, stay with Brewsters, then travel to Australia; he translates Verga. In Western Australia meets Mollie Skinner; in Thirroul, near Sydney, he writes *Kangaroo* (1923) in six weeks. Between August and September, he and Frieda travel to California via South Sea Islands, and meet Witter Bynner and Willard Johnson; settle in Taos, New Mexico, at invitation of Mabel Dodge (later Luhan). In December, move up to Del Monte Ranch, near Taos; DHL rewrites *Studies in Classic American Literature.*

1923 Finishes *Birds, Beasts and Flowers*. He and Frieda spend summer at Chapala in Mexico where he writes *Quetzalcoatl* (first version of *The Plumed Serpent*, 1926). Frieda returns to Europe in August after serious quarrel with DHL; he journeys in USA and Mexico, rewrites Mollie Skinner's *The House of Ellis* as *The Boy in the Bush* (1924); arrives back in England in December.

1924 At dinner in Café Royal, DHL invites his friends to come to New Mexico; Dorothy Brett accepts and accompanies him and Frieda in March. Mabel Luhan gives Lobo (later renamed Kiowa) Ranch to Frieda; DHL gives her *Sons and Lovers* manuscript in return. During summer on ranch he writes *St. Mawr* (1925), 'The Woman Who Rode Away' (1925) and 'The Princess' (1925); in August, suffers his first bronchial haemorrhage. His father dies in September; in October, he, Frieda and Brett move to Oaxaca, Mexico, where he starts *The Plumed Serpent* and writes most of *Mornings in Mexico* (1927).

1925 Finishes *The Plumed Serpent*, falls ill and almost dies of typhoid and pneumonia in February; in March diagnosed as suffering from tuberculosis. Recuperates at Kiowa Ranch, writes *David* (1926) and compiles *Reflections on the*

Death of a Porcupine (1925). He and Frieda return to Europe in September, spend a month in England and settle at Spotorno, Italy; DHL writes first version of *Sun* (1926); Frieda meets Angelo Ravagli.

1926 Writes *The Virgin and the Gypsy* (1930); serious quarrel with Frieda during visit from DHL's sister Ada. DHL visits Brewsters and Brett; has affair with Brett. Reconciled, DHL and Frieda move to Villa Mirenda, near Florence, in May and visit England (his last visit) in late summer. On return to Italy in October, he writes first version of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1944); starts second version in November. Friendship with Aldous and Maria Huxley; DHL starts to paint.

1927 Finishes second version of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1972); visits Etruscan sites with Earl Brewster; writes *Sketches of Etruscan Places* (1932) and the first part of *The Escaped Cock* (1928). In November, after meetings with Michael Arlen and Norman Douglas, works out scheme for private publication with Pino Orioli, and starts final version of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1928).

1928 Finishes *Lady Chatterley's Lover* and arranges for its printing and publication in Florence; fights many battles to ensure its despatch to subscribers in Britain and USA. In June writes second part of *The Escaped Cock* (1929). He and Frieda travel to Switzerland (Gsteig) and the island of Port Cros, then settle in Bandol, in the south of France. He writes many of the poems in *Pansies* (1929); *Lady Chatterley's Lover* pirated in Europe and USA.

1929 Visits Paris to arrange for cheap edition of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1929); unexpurgated typescript of *Pansies* seized by police; exhibition of his paintings in London raided by police. He and Frieda visit Majorca, France and Bavaria, returning to Bandol for the winter. He writes *Nettles* (1930), *Apocalypse* (1931) and *Last Poems* (1932); sees much of Brewsters and Huxleys.

1930 Goes into Ad Astra Sanatorium in Vence at start of February; discharges himself on 1 March; dies at Villa Robermond, Vence, on Sunday 2 March; buried on 4 March.

1935 Frieda sends Angelo Ravagli (now living with her at Kiowa Ranch – they marry in 1950) to Vence to have DHL exhumed, cremated, and his ashes brought back to the ranch.

1956 Frieda dies and is buried at Kiowa Ranch.

John Worthen, 1994

Introduction

The White Peacock (1911) has been too easily dismissed. Critics have seen obvious flaws, taken them as proof that this is apprentice work, and turned away to Lawrence's later, major novels. The convention has been that these begin with *The Rainbow* (1915), so *The Trespasser* (1912) and even *Sons and Lovers* (1913) are also glanced over as things done on the way to maturity. By that reasoning *The White Peacock* can be seen as a prelude to a prelude: its quasi-autobiographical element relates it to *Sons and Lovers*, which carried further the necessary self-analysis after which Lawrence could – so it is said – turn towards the world.

There are other important ways in which this first novel shows the buds of themes which flower in later work, for from the start Lawrence had a strong sense of what he wanted to do. *The White Peacock* is the first full-scale work of a genius and, though it has weaknesses, they are the reverse side of, or incidental to, strengths. It is another false commonplace that Lawrence was an instinctive, untidy writer. It is true that his method of composition was to dive back repeatedly into the pool of spontaneity as he compulsively revised. He radically rewrote *The White Peacock* three times. If this left some of the initial weaknesses untrimmed, the book became in the end highly organized and highly thematic. A consequence is that much of the detail insistently reinforces the structure and the meaning. It is almost a relief that some of the remaining faults are gratuitous rather than planned.

Lawrence does not announce what he is doing. You realize important implications quite slowly, and they can be startling. He sets down many things which seem trivial: a detail, a gesture, a phrase in an ordinary conversation. A current can spark from point to point in this complex circuit, and when you get the charge it is electrifying. If some obvious weaknesses prevent one feeling this, to identify them is to get them out of the way.

Readers notice that Cyril Beardsall, the 'I' who narrates, is quite soon telling us things he could not have known or heard about. An

instance is the crucial scene of George Saxton's last appeal to Lettie Beardsall (now Lettie Tempest) in the chapter entitled 'Pisgah'. Cyril is present for the first pages (298–300). But then the other two say things which can only be said with nobody else present: it is a life-determining moment, so intense that one may not realize that Cyril has dematerialized. I think most readers, when they notice instances like this, shrug. One wants the story, however told. But an important question is raised: the relationship of the author to his narrator, and to his material.

There is also some mannered overwriting in the descriptive passages, especially weak personifications and pathetic fallacies. But to dismiss all the passages about the setting because of these flaws is to fail to see how good the best ones are, and then how vitally this element contributes to the structure and meaning of the novel. Some of the prettinesses are 'in character' – the sort of thing Lettie would say, or even the sort of thing Cyril might say as a young person with a literary and artistic bent – but the powerful elements are what only Lawrence could say.

The overall pattern of the plot, too, has a flaw. Part I begins at the mid-point of a year, moves to hay- and corn-harvest, dwells lovingly on September (Cyril's birth-month, like Lawrence's), moves on to Christmas and to Lettie's birthday on 26 December. Part II takes us through the next year to harvest-time again. At each point in the year Lawrence notes with accuracy – with love – what flowers and trees are in blossom or leaf, and one begins to see how this description becomes part of the total meaning. Part III begins with Lettie's wedding, but then moves into a fast-forward mode, and by the end of the novel fifteen years have passed. Knowledge of the circumstances of Lawrence's own life leads us to assume that Parts I and II take place in a 'present' which is around 1908, but a quick calculation requires us to project these opening sections further back in time. Again, we are not bothered – even see the point of the flaw. At a late stage in the writing, Lawrence realized he had to show long-term outcomes. If plants have an annual cycle, trees need many years, and so do people.

Here are first links with Lawrence's later novels. The revolving year as the great pattern in which all lives are lived is a keynote of *The Rainbow* – which also traces patterns over generations, and manages the time-scheme better. Some of the over-lush lyricism in *The White Peacock* is like a rehearsal for later great moments such as

the opening pages in *The Rainbow*; so are some of the more striking scenes (of harvesting, or moonrise). The need to show how things work out over years, so that we reap what our parents sowed, is a characteristic Lawrentian pattern. Cyril Beardsall, we gather, is emotionally blocked, and Lettie is not only a tragic but a dangerous person, with power to harm men. We infer that their parenting is responsible, for in Part I this is briefly indicated. The father – who only appears in order to die – is a drunkard who abandoned his family, so that the mother had to rear the children alone. A comparable situation is explored in depth in *Sons and Lovers*, and we know that it is like Lawrence's early life. Here it is hinted that Cyril's past is significant, but the significance is not developed.

In fact the father's brief appearance is symptomatic of another weakness in *The White Peacock*. Part I in particular, the first written, is too episodic. Lawrence knew this. Hard at work in his teaching job in London he had less time and energy for the final revision of Parts I and II; indeed, working on the first draft, he had feared that the novel would be 'a mosaic of moods'[1] – and so it remained. Some elements just sit side by side, not organically linked. Their separability means that important things can come and go quickly. For instance, the portentous figure of Annable, the gamekeeper, surges up and dies: he is virtually dealt with in one chapter (one feels that the gamekeeper at 61:40 has been given his name in order to establish an identity earlier in the plot). However, the need to keep his presence reverberating produces unsuccessful devices: the visit to the Annable family (181–5) and the sentimental story of the adoption of his son Sam (187–90).

Then there are redundant characters such as the fat guest on snowshoes (109–14), the little vignette of Miss Sleighter (191–3), and above all the well-named and sharp-tongued Alice Gall (21:30), from whom we hear too much and who, incidentally, reveals another weakness: she could not be anything but working-class – no 'nice' girl of the time would talk like her. She blows the cover of vague refinement which Lawrence has draped over the Beardsalls in their pretty cottage. It is as if he felt that his middle-class readers could only accept country people or workers as minor characters, so he equivocates. Nothing can make the Saxtons anything but small farmers, so that part of the story has much greater reality as a loving reconstruction of the life of the real Chambers family in the real Haggs Farm (see 'The People', pp. xl–xli). And, for the plot, it is an

advantage that the social gap between Lettie and George emphasizes his problem in loving her.

Lawrence himself came to feel that there were too many conversations 'dragged in . . . to explain matters that two lines of ordinary prose would have accomplished far better . . . folk talk about themes too much.' Certainly a great deal gets said, and part of one's sense of lushness, of redundancy (or alternatively of insistent significance), and of grasping at social status, is found in the welter of intellectual and artistic allusion, and the confetti-shower of scraps of French and Latin (see how cultured we are!).

The literary presences behind the book derive from Lawrence's reading, which he shared with his friends, especially Jessie Chambers, who has left us her record of their intellectual life together. They knew by heart many poems in Palgrave's *The Golden Treasury* (1861; second edition 1891) which strongly represents the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in English verse, giving prominence to the lyrical, the pastoral and the classical, Milton's *Lycidas* (1637) being a central text in that tradition. But what is extraordinary is what Lawrence makes of this reading – also of the Latin texts which he had had quickly to 'get up' when he thought he was going to take a degree.[3] These combine with Milton's pagan mythologizing to become a real power. The persistent references to a classical world of myth and pastoral are more than mere allusions. Myth crashes into this world in the baffled Pan-figure Annable. Much more subtly, George as we first see him establishes the reality of farming life which once generated literary pastoral. The unreal young men who think they are sending up country life with their College Miltonisms and classical allusions in the chapter 'Pastorals and Peonies' (225–33) are silently answered, socially, physically and in the artistic terms they feebly invoke by what George is at the beginning, and then by his tragic story.

One can concede all the faults and find none of them fundamental, but rather, as I am suggesting, the obverse of complementary strengths. If it were not also a subtle form of denigration, one could develop the case for seeing *The White Peacock* as foundational, integral to the whole Lawrence canon. This is borne out by many details. For instance, the image of a gamekeeper striding, with his bulky velveteen jacket flapping about him, animates all three versions of the Lady Chatterley story, and leads to the notion of a wood into

which lovers can turn aside and be in a world out of the world (126:13, 131:24–5, 132:25). The dance with which Lettie wordlessly puts Leslie down (55–6) is like the dance with which Anna puts Will down in *The Rainbow* (Chapter VI: 'Anna Victrix'). The lamenting peewits which haunt this landscape recur in *Sons and Lovers* and *The Rainbow* (see note on 179:25).

And so on: all that is highly characteristic as detail and always leads into significance. But all the novels and stories set in the country in, round or near Eastwood and The Haggs – in particular *Sons and Lovers*, *The Rainbow*, *Women in Love*, the opening sections of *The Lost Girl*, *Aaron's Rod*, *Mr Noon* – implicitly take as their starting point the serious questions which establish the ambitiousness of this novel: 'If you were born where I was, when I was, of my people, what did life offer you? – and not just to me, Lawrence, the talented, the favoured, if also the damaged one. What about the whole peer-group, the cohort, and not just the working-class children? As they approached the end of childhood, how did they enter the world? To what extent were they formed by the place, did they belong to it, and how could they extract themselves – or were they expelled? How did they find love, or (in the naturalist's terms which the whole texture of the book enforces) how did they mate? What (to use the weighty words on 284:11–12) is "the good progress of one's life"? By what standard is that measured? Not ordinary social success, evidently, or ordinary marriage and family life.' Cyril Beardsall belongs to this group, speaks for it, and these questions, although unexpressed, are prompted by his consciousness, and trouble him. He has that function as well as being the narrating 'I', the intermediary with the reader.

Lawrence used the technique of the narrator only three times: here; in the much later short story 'None of That' (1928), which has both a narrator and an 'I' who tells his story to the narrator; and in a fragment called 'Elsa Culverwell', an early version of material for *The Lost Girl*.[4] That was a brilliant beginning, but was dropped – I suspect because Lawrence did not want to be either trapped within, or else making ironic signals about, the narrating ego. He needed to be calling on his own full powers, and channelling them through a personal voice could be a distortion.

An alternative solution was to use an alter ego, a Lawrence-figure in the plot, as representative. Yet it is evident that such figures, from Paul Morel in *Sons and Lovers* to Richard Somers in *Kangaroo*

(1923), are given the same status as the other personae, and are often sharply criticized by them. They are powerful, even have authority, but are not uniquely privileged. Cyril Beardsall, however, has particular privileges. He speaks for the group because he is the most articulate and talented member; he is the artist (he paints, like Paul Morel). He acts as instructor to both George and Emily. It is his voice that speaks the poetry of the book, and one takes some of it as in character because it is a romantic young man's archness or lushness that gives us too much about flowers talking to him or seeming like the breasts of water-nymphs (158:2–5). Yet it is because he is a real interpreter that we also hear the deeper note, the true poetry, so that we accept him as if he were the author as well as the narrator: the potential division between the roles is at these points either bridged or helpfully confused. But it is not abolished. In an important respect Lawrence is outside Cyril.

We have grasped that Cyril has a problem: given what we hear about his family history, we can quickly put two and two together. It is striking that he does not do so himself. It is Lettie who says at one point: '"You wonder how I have touched death. You don't know. There's always a sense of death in this home. I believe my mother hated my father before I was born. That was death in her veins for me before I was born"' (28:34–7).

We may reflect that it is Lawrence who gives her these words, and so that *he* records, even if Cyril doesn't, the emotional damage done to the Beardsall children. Here too, Cyril is relating a conversation at which he is only initially present; but Lettie's words are recorded as hers, and Cyril makes no application of them to himself. It is the progress of the novel, not any self-analysis of his, which establishes for us, the readers, that Cyril has some emotional block. He thinks that Emily has one too, and is very ready both with her and with George to talk about *their* difficulties and to pose as wiser. Yet one suspects that he could be projecting some of his own problem on to them, as a way of both seeing and not seeing. Emily is more clear-sighted about him, since with regret she writes him off as damaged son and hopeless lover and turns to a man without his complications, if without his gifts. Given that Cyril is the narrator, it is surprising that none of this is consciously registered by him. It is conveyed to us by the whole course of the novel.

Though Lettie's words about her family show that she has a half-formed understanding about what she profoundly is, what she does

and how she too fails, full self-realization is beyond her grasp as well as Cyril's. Moreover, her story is told in terms which are expressive in ways which analytical explanation can only summarize: the novel provides an understanding which she does not have, conveyed in ways that she could not manage, an understanding which is above all not made explicit and handed over as the diagnosis of a case.

That kind of understanding is what Lawrence conveys, by his own means, in the book. So it would be oversimplistic to say that Cyril's problem is simply his creator's problem, and the reason why Lawrence had to go on to write *Sons and Lovers*. Even there, most critics have thought that because Paul Morel is the central consciousness and a Lawrence-figure, though not the narrator, Lawrence was imperfectly distanced from him, therefore 'unjust' to some characters, especially to Miriam (Emily's counterpart). I would reply that the careful pattern established in the structure, and now retrieved in the newly published text of *Sons and Lovers* (see Penguin edition, 1994), reveals the author's full understanding of the way in which the family conflicts have shaped the children. Paul Morel's case happens to be like Lawrence's own, but is representative as well as unique, and it is understood as part of a family pattern. The case of the elder brother William in important ways foreshadows that of Paul. To see the pattern in *Sons and Lovers* is to see that there *is* a distance between author and character. That distance is foreshadowed here, in *The White Peacock*, where Cyril, articulate as he is, has less than full self-knowledge, and even a certain innocence. In this respect the first novel anticipates the success of the later one, not its failure.

But, to come to the last of the problems or weaknesses of *The White Peacock*, there is one matter in which the novel does share Cyril's innocence: in its account of Cyril's relationship with George. Here, modern, sophisticated readers have to rein in an impulse to say, 'Ah yes, covert homosexuality'. But the broad mass of the original readership in 1911 was as innocent as Cyril: if there was a violent homophobic minority, acting from ignorance and fear, the majority was not aware of homosexuality, and was very willing to entertain a romantic idea of male bonding. Pylades and Orestes, Nisus and Euryalus in classical literature, David and Jonathan in the Bible were all noble figures. Manly men could love each other and not feel confused or guilty. Close friendship was a thing to want; still is, for both sexes; and Lawrence always wanted it badly, as a complement to committed heterosexual relationship.